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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003115

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SUBJECT: VOTER REGISTRATION UPDATE SECURITY PLAN

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FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D).

1.(C) SUMMARY: The voter registration update (VRU) process continues to progress. One of the greatest challenges has been keeping the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Ministry of Interior (MOI) continuously and simultaneously engaged in the planning. However, both agencies were instrumental in categorizing the 542 District Electoral Offices (DEOs) into different threat-level categories. Additionally, both were present at meetings where force field plans and the results of nation-wide communications exercises were discussed. The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) has selected National Air Cargo (NAC) to handle VRU material transport; however, NAC is extremely behind schedule considering VRU is set to begin August 1. VRU start dates will likely vary across the country. END SUMMARY.

2.(C) ENGAGEMENT OF MINISTRIES IN PLANNING: When Elections Joint Working Group (EJWG) meetings commenced nearly a month ago, the MOD appeared to be disengaged from VRU planning. However, in past weeks, MOD Joint Head Quarters (JHQ) has stepped up its engagement with active participation in weekly EJWG meetings, as well as attendance at a recent IECI security conference. Unfortunately, however, due to poor communication between IECI and MOD, MOD did not prepare any brief for the conference. Moreover, for the past two weekly meetings, MOI Director of Elections Security, Major General (MG) Aydin, was called away on other matters, an unfortunate development during such a crucial time. Since he left no deputy with decision-making authority in his stead, limited progress was made during the meetings he missed. Fortunately, the registration security plan was drafted before MG Aydin left and remains unchanged. Additionally, this plan is very similar to the one used during the January elections.

3.(C) EXTERNAL REGISTRATION SITE SECURITY: 542 DEOs have been established for the purposes of conducting voter registration update. Most of the DEOs are located in government buildings and will derive their immediate security from Iraqi Police (IP). Threat levels are divided into three categories: critical, more critical and most critical as assessed by Iraqi ground commanders and Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I). The assessed threat levels determine how each DEO will be protected throughout August. Currently, for example, Al Anbar and Baghdad ratings equate to most critical, meaning their protection involves the use of three concentric security circles where IP form the circle closest to the DEOs, Iraqi Army (IA) the middle circle and IA plus Coalition Forces (CF) the outermost ring. The outer layer is designed to be transparent to most Iraqis. Originally, election planning was designed to decrease the MNF-I presence and put an "Iraqi face" on all aspects of the elections process. In a recent military order, however, Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) stated it would augment Iraqi efforts in both the inner and middle rings of security as needed. Nevertheless, the plan remains to have CF's presence as visibly limited as possible.

4.(C) INTERNAL REGISTRATION SITE SECURITY: Internally, the DEOs will be staffed with 10-12 IECI employees during hours of operation, which are 0800-1700 Monday through Thursday. These hours will enable the registration of 250 people per day per site. Between one and four million people across the country are expected to participate in the VRU. Previous EJWG meetings have suggested IECI workers may search registrants with metal-detecting wands and chemical explosive detecting pads. IECI plans to provide phone numbers on its web site to enable registrants to call in to determine whether they need to visit VRU sites. This phone-in customer service initiative will also provide an additional security measure, since many people can avoid visiting potentially dangerous VRU sites unnecessarily.

5.(C) WHEN WILL SECURITY BE IN PLACE? DEO Registration security is scheduled to be in place throughout the country by July 27 to accommodate an August 1 launch. Forces will be in position on this start date even if VRU is delayed to impart a sense of personal security and confidence in the VRU process to the Iraqi people.

6.(C) REGISTRATION COMMUNICATIONS: MNF-I has conducted

several communications exercises over the past month with the National Joint Operations Center (NJOC), the JHQ at MOD, the MOI National Control Center, Provincial Joint Coordination Centers and the Joint Coordination Centers throughout Iraq. These exercises are designed to expedite threat and incident reporting to the Iraqi C2 centers and MNF-I. In an actual emergency, NJOC will directly inform the Prime Minister of incidents. MNF-I conducts frequent communications exercises; however, progress with secure and non-secure voice and data communications has been lacking, requiring more practice and coordination.

7.(C) VRU MATERIAL TRANSPORT AND SECURITY: IECI selected NAC to transport, collect and protect completed VRU materials, however NAC has not officially signed a contract and is way behind schedule. At this writing, VRU materials have been delayed in Sharjah (UAE), and are re-scheduled to arrive in Iraq July 28. IECI says VRU materials traveled from Austria to Sharjah and will enter Iraq via the Baghdad, Irbil and Basra Regional Airports. Materials will then be transported from these airports via contracted security to warehouses guarded by Federal Building Security. Per GEO request, IECI will transport VRU materials to the DEOs via taxicabs, pick-up trucks and personal vehicles as they feel this method will attract less attention than convoys and allow them to "fly under the radar." The amount of time needed to distribute VRU materials throughout the country is said to vary anywhere from three days to three weeks. Thus, the EJWG feels registration will likely occur August 7 vice August 1. However, even if VRU is delayed, IECI has no plans to extend the VRU beyond August 31.

8.(C) OTHER SECURITY CONCERNS: After one EJWG adjourned, one member raised a concern that insurgents may attempt to masquerade as ISF wearing ISF uniforms, as recent reports have indicated. Another concern involved the bona fide of media personnel covering the registration process. Although these concerns are relevant, EJWG members believe the current security plan addresses these concerns adequately.

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